

Muslim Life IN ★ AMERICA

I send greetings to Muslims in the United States and around the world as you observe the holy month of Ramadan.

Islam is a peace-loving faith that is practiced by more than one billion people, including millions of American Muslims. These proud citizens contribute to the diversity that makes our country strong, and the United States is grateful for the friendship and support of many Muslim Nations that are vital partners in the global coalition to fight against terrorism.

The Qur'an teaches that Ramadan is a time for fasting, prayer, worship, and contemplation. Muslims observe this month by renewing their dedication to caring for those in need, doing good deeds, and strengthening family and community ties. These actions reflect many of the values that Muslims share with people of other faiths across our Nation and around the world, including courage, compassion, and service.

America remains committed to freedom, justice, and opportunity for all people. During this season of reverence and examination, we continue to work together for a future of peace, tolerance, and understanding.

Laura joins me in sending our best wishes for a blessed time. May you be well during Ramadan and throughout the coming year.

-- President George W. Bush
November 2002



Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Ramadan Kareem. I would like to welcome you to the State Department and thank you for sharing your blessed Ramadan Iftaar with us this evening.

From Muslims here tonight, especially in the conversations we have been having at the table, and from Muslims throughout the world that I have been privileged to meet, I have learned to respect Ramadan as an intensely spiritual time, a month of worship, a month of contemplation and self-renewal for Muslims everywhere.

In these days, when our world, our nation, our communities, and we ourselves face great challenges, it is important to tap into the inner strength that comes from deep faith.

This is also a time to look outward and reaffirm the bonds of family and the bonds of community that tie us together and make us strong.

We are blessed to live in a nation that offers each of us the freedom to live our lives, raise our children, and worship God as we see fit, under the protection of our law.

We are also a people blessed in our diversity. I have been telling audiences lately who ask about American diversity: Just look at any American city. Leave this building and take a five-minute ride in any direction, and you will find Protestant churches of at least 12 different denominations, you will find Catholic churches and Orthodox churches, you will find temples, you will find synagogues, all coexisting within one city, one community, all worshipping a God in places where people go to worship a God.

We are unique. America is a nation of nations, whose citizens hail from every land and observe every religion.

America is a nation where a Christian Secretary of State, the son of Jamaican immigrants, can host an Iftaar for Muslim Americans who trace their ancestry back to South Asia, East Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, and every corner of the globe.

In our diversity and our spirituality, our tolerance and our commitment to human dignity, lies our strength and lies our hope for a better future.

Extremism and violence are our greatest enemies, our greatest foes. We must not listen to the siren song of the bigots and extremists who cloak themselves in false spirituality in an attempt to divide and to weaken us.

That is our message to the world, a message we know is echoed by many of our Muslim friends across the globe.

At the same time, we seek to deepen our engagement with Muslims on all levels. The exchange of scholars, the flow of commerce, and personal interactions of all types, such as you have with your families and friends and colleagues -- all of these ties strengthen understanding between the United States and Muslim countries around the world.

We are committed here in the Department and in this Administration under President Bush's leadership to ensuring that our programs continue to reach out to Muslims in all walks of life -- educators and political leaders, religious figures and government officials, journalists and business people. We want to increase the size of our programs to bring these individuals to the United States to be with us for a while, to share our lives with us, let them explore how American institutions and organizations tackle the challenges that we share in common.

Indeed, I was mentioning to my guests at the table that we recently hosted over 50 distinguished Arab women political leaders, who visited our country to observe first hand our elections just a couple of weeks ago. And they spread out all across the country and they watched on election eve in a number of communities to see how American democracy all came together to say to the leaders of the country: This is what we, the people, want you, our leaders, to do.

Other groups of community and religious leaders have visited this year from many, many lands, including Central and Southeast Asia, to learn about our country.

We are also committed to building understanding by building hope. From the mountains of Afghanistan to the valleys of Bosnia, from the plains of Africa to the forests of Asia, in the Arab world and around the world, we are on the ground, working with our Muslim partners to expand the circle of peace, the circle of prosperity, the circle of freedom.

Honored guests, one of the most powerful ways to bring diverse people together is by breaking bread across religions -- at an Easter dinner, at a Seder, or at an Iftaar, as we are doing here this evening.

It is said that God listens to the supplication of the fasting person and answers that supplication. So tonight, I wish you wisdom in your supplications, I wish you peace, and I wish you prosperity throughout the coming year.

Ramadan Kareem. Thank you.

-- **Colin L. Powell**, Secretary of State
November 18, 2002



In November 2000, the United States Postal Service unveiled the eid stamp, the very first stamp to recognise American Islam. The stamp focuses on the two major islamic holidays, both titled "eid" – Eid Mubarak and Eid-ul-Fitr. The stamp has become so popular that the Postal Service has decided to re-issue it every year.

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



In Observance of the Holy Month of Ramadhan

Iftar

16 Ramadhan 1423

(21 November 2002)

Serena Inn, Stone Town, Zanzibar

